While finding the new critique from the ANR division sound, Smith and others in the Dibe office felt that the evaluation did not take into account the difficult conditions immediately after the drought in the 1980s when the projects began. At the time the projects were designed, Smith and others argued, they provided a logical transition from emergency relief to rehabilitation programming by concentrating on drought-proofing and other conservation methods that were not necessarily the first priority of the participants themselves. Nonetheless, Smith recognized that adjusting the project designs in light of current circumstances was essential to solidifying PID's impact in Dongola, not to mention her own reputation as a country director.

*Revolt of the Sub-offices.* Concurrent with the critical evaluation of the ANR program was a rising tide of dissatisfaction in the field. During her first few months, the project managers of all four ANR projects complained bitterly to Smith that their hands were tied by the central office:

[The project managers felt they] were just being told what to do, both programmatically and administratively by headquarters without much room for give and take. The way programming was done, the decisions about what kinds of activities a project was going to get involved in were very top-down; everything had to pass through the central office.

*Inexperienced Managers.* Central office staff, Smith knew, held the belief that many of the project managers in the field did not have adequate experience for their assignments, an impression Smith shared in part. While half of the project managers had two or more decades of development experience, the expatriates who filled these positions in other projects were, by and large, technicians, not managers. Their expertise lay in a particular technical area, and Smith found, they were unaccustomed to managing the scale of projects PID had underway, which might involve a half million dollar annual budget and four dozen employees. Smith comments:

The less experienced [project managers] had a Peace-Corps or Peace-Corps like experience and maybe had done one or two other things, but they were not managers.

Recruitment was difficult at best for two reasons. First, to work in Dongola required fluency in French, the country's official language, and PID's network of Francophone development professionals was far more limited than the organization's contacts among those who spoke English and worked in Anglophone countries. Also, Dongola lacked the kinds of amenities many mid-career development professionals (those with adequate experience to run a large-scale program) expected to find. None of the towns where the sub-offices were located boasted much in the way of modern amenities; rural Dongola had little to offer spouses seeking employment or European and American children seeking schooling. Not surprisingly, the San Francisco office always had problems in finding qualified managers, and those who were hired often arrived very late.
Moreover, recruitment was a recurring problem, as many project managers left their post when their contracts ran out after two years. Some would extend for an additional year, but even that amount of time often proved inadequate to master the job. "The turnover was unacceptable," says Smith. "By the time somebody came and learned the job, they're time was up."

Such frequent turnover created tumult in both the central and the field offices; headquarters staff had to orient a constant stream of newcomers to PID's administrative procedures, and the project staff had to "gear up" continuously for new leaders and new priorities.

**Post-Emergency Mode**

Smith realized that lack of experience on the part of some of the field staff explained only one aspect of why those in the central office had grown accustomed to a heavy-handed style of management. The other side, according to Smith, had to do with the way Dire staff viewed their responsibilities. One PID Dongola staff member summed up the approach of both expatriates and Dongolans at the central office in a phrase: they were still working in "post-emergency mode." Smith also believes that PID-Dongola seemed not to have made the transition from the hierarchical organization required of operating in an emergency to what she viewed as the kind of structure that could sustain development projects effectively:

Emergency food distribution by necessity is top down. It's very directed. There's only one good way to do it, and that's the way it has to be done. I think that might have translated over into [development project] programming, where people in the capital said, 'This is the way to do it, period.' Things were imposed.

Had "things" shown a more positive result, Smith believes she might have had a difficult time recognizing the organizational problems that plagued her office. But the field staff had made clear their view that the central office was making unreasonable demands and not providing the support the sub-offices required to manage isolated and technically-complex development projects. She recalls:

There was a feeling that the central office was not able to meet their requests for urgent supplies or for recruiting new staff or getting money out to them in a timely fashion so they didn't have any ruptures in their cash flow.
Assessing the Central Office

Having found widespread dissatisfaction with operations in the central office, Smith set out to unearth what was happening at her office. While the headquarters relationship with the field appeared to be hierarchical, inside the office the distribution of tasks appeared to be helter-skelter. When Smith began to examine how the office functioned, she had difficulty sorting out where one job ended and another began. As new projects had come on and the office had expanded, those already employed were given additional responsibilities outside of their primary scope of work, and new employees were hired to cover gaps. Smith could not make out a coherent allocation of responsibilities, which she viewed as an artifact of the office's rapid expansion:

Getting involved in the emergency programming and then having five out of six projects come on in a two year period meant that some of the systems just weren't in place.

Because of PD Dongola's sudden transformation, some administrative systems, recalls Smith, required updating to keep pace with the organization's growth. Needed were more clearly defined policies for such things as personnel management and procurement as well as detailed job descriptions. "People were just doing things the way they always had, or three people were doing the same thing but doing it differently," says Smith. "When you wanted to orient new staff, you didn't really have much to go on, other than to hand them over to someone who had done the job before." The problem appeared throughout the office, from a junior-level purchasing agent who also had a handful of other significant responsibilities, including the time-consuming task of maintaining daily radio contact with the sub-offices, to the chief of personnel who doubled as the government relations officer, an assignment that had grown to occupy most of his time.

Smith's Cabinet. The structural imbalance at PD Dongola's headquarters was especially evident in the top tier of managers who reported directly to Smith. Of her three direct reports—the chief financial officer and two assistant country directors—only the financial officer appeared to be in a position that was clearly-defined and matched his skills and experience. "I never had to worry about that side of the equation," says Smith of the finance officer, "He had a lot of authority and a lot of integrity, so that was never a concern." On the other hand, her two assistants, both North Americans who had worked with PD Dongola for several years, seemed to be in positions that had ballooned with the organization's growth and no longer matched what either they wanted or PD Dongola needed. Smith knew when she arrived that both assistant directors intended to transfer at the end of their current contracts because of the frustrations they had encountered in their work.

The assistant country director for programs was nominally in charge of the programming decisions for all six projects. Smith believes the job itself was unmanageable, "It was too much to expect him to backstop six projects and to help design new ones, especially when you're talking about different technical areas. There was no way that he could know each project well enough to make
program decisions." Rather than make those decisions or delegate authority to those in the field to make them, the assistant director's time was consumed by pressing administrative tasks, such as fulfilling the reporting requirements of the half-dozen or more donors of PD Dongola's programs or ensuring the continuity of funding.9

The counterpart of the assistant director for programs, the assistant director for administration, was responsible for such matters as personnel management and oversight of the vehicle fleet. He had been with PD Dongola for nearly a decade and was well-versed in the country and its culture. However, many of his current responsibilities had been thrust on him over the previous two years, during the organization's sudden expansion, responsibilities for which he appeared to have little enthusiasm. Moreover, his long tenure at PD Dongola appeared to impede his ability to improve office operations. "He'd built up certain working relationships with people," Smith says, "These were hard to change even if he saw problems in systems or performance."

Transportation Trauma. The misfit among the responsibilities of the staff, their capabilities, and the scale of the office's operations were the more benign symptoms of rapid growth. The lack of a coherent structure at headquarters also opened up the possibility of abuse, which came to be of particular concern in the management of PD Dongola's vehicle fleet. Across town from the staff offices, PD Dongola maintained a central garage, where the garage manager, an expatriate Frenchman, appeared to hold court. Smith claims it was a "major management activity even to know how many vehicles we had, how well they were being used, and whether they were getting regular maintenance and repair." The garage had no telephone and its manager appeared to have no formal reporting responsibilities to anyone in the central office. The inventory of spare parts was out of date and the system for providing fuel to PD vehicles was not closely monitored. Absent clearly defined guidelines covering such things as the procurement of spare parts or procedures detailing how vehicles were to be used and maintained, the manager was free to operate as he wished. Suspicious arose about his activities; however, the lack of policies made the task of holding him accountable for his indiscretions all the more difficult.

Dongolan Labor Laws. Nonetheless, handling expatriate personnel problems was a far easier task than handling problems that arose concerning Dongolans. Smith had worked in Africa long enough to know that the lack of clarity about people's responsibilities as well as the absence of clearly articulated personnel procedures put PD Dongola at great risk, particularly in its treatment of Dongolan staff members. In a labor market where jobs were at a premium, Dongolan labor law was heavily biased towards the employee, making it very difficult to remove an employee for incompetence. "You could only remove them if they did something totally flagrant, like stole money," says Smith. "Even if someone resigned, they could later sue."

9 According to Smith, two of the six projects faced gaps in funding mid-way through their term.
This had ramifications both in the field and at headquarters. The combination of inexperienced expatriate project managers and unclear procedures seemed potentially explosive in light of the severity of the law. At the Dibe office, Smith believed, the labor laws clouded her ability to carry forward any bold reshuffling of roles and responsibilities.

Smith's Options

Smith recognized that her predecessor had done much to prepare the foundation for PID's ability to make a lasting impact in Dongola. Smith stepped into the position at a time when relations with the government and with donors were excellent. In addition, there was a solid core of talented national staff both in the field and in the central office. Nonetheless, Smith had to come to terms with the problems that beset the mission in three major areas: the direction of the country's programs, particularly the ANR projects; the relationship between field staff and headquarters; and the organization of the central office.

Programming. Smith's regional manager advised her to “add more PNs,” the acronym for project numbers. He wanted her to continue to build PID Dongola's portfolio, to strengthen the funding base and further diversify the programming areas in which the mission was involved, especially in light of the critical appraisal of the ANR projects.

That the ANR projects were in trouble was clear. They had been instrumental in rapidly putting PID Dongola “on the map.” Moreover, they had enabled PID to maintain personnel, buildings and equipment in the areas hardest hit by the drought, areas that might at any moment, given the continuing paucity of rainfall, require emergency food distribution. But that infrastructure was maintained at the price of fielding programs that could not always meet the current needs of the people they were intended to help.

Conventional wisdom held that the ANR blueprint had failed. The cutting edge of agricultural development in Africa had moved on to another model, one that emphasized the participation of villagers in the conduct of an “integrated assessment of land-use planning.” This meant that field agents worked in close collaboration with villagers to determine a project's priorities, as opposed to figuring out ways of prodding villagers to carry out a predetermined roster of activities. Smith knew this participatory approach was highly-regarded by donors at the time. However, to transform PID Dongola's projects would require tremendous energy: external evaluations, negotiations with donors, reorienting field staff, and most difficult, shifting the responsibilities for project management to the field.

Smith debated how best to expend her energy; she wondered how much emphasis to place on improving the existing projects versus getting new projects underway. One thing was clear, however, donor funds were far more difficult to come by in the late 1980s than in the aftermath of the famine. Overall American assistance to sub-Saharan Africa fell by 30 percent from the mid-1980s to
the early 1990s, a result not only of "donor fatigue" but of the decline of the strategic importance of Africa in the post-cold war world. Nonetheless, she knew she would be judged in part by the number of new projects she could bring onto her office’s books.

Healing the Field / Central Office Rift. No matter the direction she pursued in programming, Smith recognized she had to mend the rifts between field staff and those at the central office. She emphasizes her belief that, "The field staff paid our salaries and our rent. They supported us in the central office. We were there to serve the sub-offices." To get the central office staff to concur with her view of the importance of the field, according to Smith, would require that a new mentality take hold in the central office. It would also mean ensuring that the field staff received more than moral support. Given the limited labor pool and the high turnover of expatriates in the field, Smith believed that the only way of assuring both quality and stability in the short term was to provide appropriate doses of technical expertise while demanding only the minimal administrative burden of the sub-offices.

Over the long run, Smith was determined to move towards greater reliance on Dongolans in top project positions, but she recognized that such a prospect was years in the making. Dongolans with adequate experience often refused postings outside of the capital for the same reasons some expatriates shunned such assignments which were considered the boondocks. Smith’s predecessor, Walker, had tried to solve the problem of turnover by recruiting, or at least grooming, Dongolans already hired by PID to fill the project manager slots, but the one attempt at such an effort, the promotion of a Dongolan assistant project manager, was not going well. No other assistant project managers appeared to have the skills and education to make the leap from assistant to chief in the short run.

Retooling Headquarters. Finally, Smith recognized that she would have to bring some sense of order to headquarters operations. Although she acknowledged the need, she was unclear how to proceed. She did not feel confident enough in her own managerial acumen to carry out a grand strategy; as a newcomer herself, she knew she had to proceed thoughtfully if she were to retain the trust of her staff. She considered the task of getting such a diverse group of "strong and talented personalities" to work together as a team among her most difficult challenges.

Two Vacancies and A Way Forward

Among Smith’s most valuable cards as she considered how to proceed was the possibility of infusing headquarters with new blood. Both of her assistant country directors would be leaving in the fall of 1990. While she assessed the myriad chores facing her in synchronizing the size of the mission with the scope of its projects, she debated how best to fill these two vacancies. Together with her regional manager, she would need to lay out a plan not only for their replacement but for the revitalization of the country office as a whole. She realized her next actions would be crucial to
keeping Pd Dongola on the map now that her predecessor had made its presence so emphatically felt throughout the country.
Exhibit 1

Partners for Development

**STRUCTURE**

- **BOARD**
  - CEO
  - COO

- **EXEC STAFF**

**VP ADVOCACY**

**VP HR**

**SVP PROGRAM**

**SVP MARKET**

**VP FIN & ADMIN**

CI (International)

TAG (Technical Assistance Group)

SSAD (Small Scale Agricultural Development)

AGR (Agriculture and Rural Resources)

P&H (Primary Health Care)

FOOD (Food Security Unit)

POP (Population)

RMS (Research Management Group)

WAF (West Africa)

WAP (West Asia)

SAP (Southern Africa)

LA (Latin America)

MODS (Mission & Org. Dev't. Services)

MDN (Map, Desk'ry, Tabl.)

MIS (Information Systems)

EAU (Emergency Assistance Unit)
Exhibit 2

Partners for Development
STRUCTURE

Central Office

COUNTRY DIRECTOR

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

ASSISTANT COUNTRY DIRECTOR PROGRAM

ASSISTANT COUNTRY DIRECTOR ADMINISTRATION

Region 1 PROJECT MANAGER
Region 2 PROJECT MANAGER
Region 3 PROJECT MANAGER
Region 4 SUB-OFFICE COORDINATOR

Sub-Offices
Exhibit 3

Map of Dongola

LEGEND

- International Boundary
- Road
- River
- Town
- Sub-office
- Capital
Exhibit 4

DONGOLA INDEX

Population (1991): 8,100,000
Annual growth rate: 3.5%

Urban population: 1,980,000 (22%)
Population in the year 2000: 12,300,000
Urban population in 2000: 3,012,000

Population increase in 2000: 36%
Population increase in 2010: 100%
Population increase in 2050: 700%

Area of Dongola: 1,240,000 km²
Density per km²: 7
Density per km² arable land (1991): 430
Density per km² arable land (2000): 800
Density per km² arable land (2050): 3,000
(supposing that the area of arable land does not increase)

Cereals production in 1991: 1.3 million metric tons
Dongola's annual cereals needs produced in Dongola (1991): 101%
Annual needs produced in Dongola (2000): 73%
(supposing the same production as 1991)

Number of heads of cattle: 5 million
Number of heads of sheep and goats: 11 million
Percentage of the agricultural sector in cereals production: 29%
Percentage of the agricultural sector production in forestry goods: 11%
Percentage of the agricultural sector production in livestock: 50%

GDP: (1991): D2.3 billion (625 billion FCFA)
Per capita income (1991): D280 (70,200 FCFA)

Life expectancy: 49 years
Infant mortality rate: 10.2%
Child mortality rate (1-6 yrs): 9%

Three principal causes of infant mortality: fever, diarrhoea, tetanus
Childhood preventative vaccination coverage: 43%
Population with access to medical services: 15%
Percentage of births with medical assistance (outside of Dibbi): 14%

Average age of marriage for women: 15 years
Average amount of time between births: 27 months
Percentage of deaths among women 15-45 years linked to procreation: 50%
Education rate among women: 5.6%
Adult male literacy rate: 25%